

In the Specification

Please replace paragraph [00008] of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

[00008] Referring to FIGS. 1-2, IV catheter introducer 10 preferably comprises tubular plastic housing 12, needle holder assembly 14, retraction mechanism ~~spring~~ 16, plunger assembly 18 and IV catheter 20. Plastic housing 12 has an internal bore 22 that narrows progressively between open end 24 and reduced diameter tip 26, except for a short distance below inwardly projecting annular ring 102, as described below. Plastic housing 12 is preferably injection molded from a substantially transparent polymeric resin such as polycarbonate to permit easy viewing through sidewall 28. The outside diameter of housing 12 generally follows the tapered narrowing of internal bore 22, so that sidewall 28 has a substantially constant thickness except where it flares outwardly to form laterally extending wings 30 and to provide a longitudinally spaced series of annular ridges 31 nearer to tip 26 to create a textured gripping area for the fingers of the user.

Please replace paragraph [00009] of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

[00009] Needle holder assembly 14 is retractably mounted within the lower portion of housing 12 and preferably comprises a tapered, elongate tubular body 32, needle 34 and porous plug 36. Body 32 of needle holder assembly 14 is preferably injection molded from a substantially transparent polymeric resin such as polycarbonate and comprises a tapering sidewall of substantially constant thickness that further defines flash chamber 42, spring guide section 44 and needle support section 46, each of which has a progressively smaller diameter. Tubular body 32 of needle holder assembly 14 is desirably shaped so as to permit needle holder assembly 14 to be inserted into sliding engagement with housing 12 during assembly, as described in greater detail below. The upper end portion of tubular body 32 is adapted to releasably engage lower end 56 of plunger assembly 18 as described below in relation to FIG. 4. As viewed in FIG. 2, retraction mechanism ~~spring~~ 16, which is preferably a spring, is confined within annular

space 90 between housing 12 and spring guide section 44 of tubular body 32, and is held in compression between downwardly facing shoulder 92 of tubular body 32 and upwardly facing shoulder 94 of housing 12. Although this embodiment uses a compressed spring that exerts a retraction force by expanding, other similarly effective means such as an extension spring can likewise be used to retract the needle.

Please replace paragraph [00010] of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

[00010] Needle 34 is hollow and has a beveled end 48, which is inserted into a patient's vein during use, and a blunt end 50 that extends into flash chamber 42. A longitudinally extending bore provides fluid communication through needle 34 between beveled end 48 and blunt end 50. Needle 34 is preferably insert molded into needle support section 46 of tubular body 32 to create an insert molded needle. However, needle 34 ~~but~~ can be glued or sonically welded into body 32 if desired. A tapered needle insertion opening 47 is desirably provided at the lower end of needle support section 46 if needle 34 is to be inserted after molding needle support section 46. By using a needle 34 that is long enough to extend into flash chamber 42, the bore of needle 34 will not become occluded during insert molding. Also, because a minor amount of blood flows upwardly through needle 34 into flash chamber 42 whenever needle 34 is introduced into the vein of a patient, making blunt end 50 visible in flash chamber 42 permits the user to view blood as soon as it enters flash chamber 42, confirming to the user that needle 34 is properly positioned inside the vein.